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Testimony regarding HB 5300, *AN ACT REQUIRING LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL FOR THE MERGER OR CLOSING OF INSTITUTIONS WITHIN THE CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AND PROHIBITING THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY-TECHNICAL COLLEGES*

Senator Slap, Representative Elliott, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

The justifications for consolidation have changed dramatically since it was first proposed. It does not put students first. It does not save money. It does not meet the needs of the community's where the colleges are, and despite these, NECHE accepted the proposal. You are our last hope. You are the backstop to ensure students do not become a number in higher education in Connecticut.

In short, what consolidation does exceedingly well is add layers of well-paid management positions that distance decision making from those who are impacted and put systems in places where students were once served by people.

Consolidation creates layers of bureaucracy. Do you remember how difficult it was to navigate higher education? Now imagine doing so in a system that prioritizes processes over people, reactions over responses, and systems in place of services.

Consolidation results in no one being responsible when mistakes are made. When no one is responsible, that also means correcting the problem is frustrating and time consuming. This is true for students who are given the wrong information, misdirected, or abandoned while trying to navigate a growing bureaucratic nightmare. It is also true for faculty and staff who try to help solve those problems.

The CSCU has long complained about declines in enrollment, but they abandoned marketing in our communities a decade ago. The CSCU has pivoted to metrics, operations, and shared services, while ignoring the hallowed shell of services they left in the wake of dismantling of our colleges.

I am one of the 'hundreds of faculty and staff' who 'worked earnestly' on Consolidation. And along with many of my colleagues, my input was ignored and my votes vetoed. My reluctant presence on committees however is used as ***evidence of participation***.

Despite what the CSCU would have you believe, Consolidation does not improve faculty or staff's ability to meet student's needs. It treats them as a number. It will not increase retention; it will certainly doom it. It does not decrease costs; it creates a shell game that makes auditing their claims futile.

You are our last hope. Please pass this bill that requires the legislature to approve the merger or closing of the colleges.

Thank you,
Elle Van Dermark